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HOMEMAKERS' NEWS

Monday, February 6, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WOODS FOR FURNITURE." Information from the U. S. Forest Service.

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February, in many places, is the month of furniture sales, just as January is noted for its white sales. People are thinking about furnishing up their homes in the spring. Generally they have a good idea as to what pieces they need, but often they know very little about the quality of the furniture offered for sale. The kind of wood will be largely determined by what they already have. A couple starting out to furnish a new home may decide on some wood that is a departure from the ever popular mahogany, walnut, maple, or oak.

Today I have brought you some information on selecting furniture. It's from the Forest Products Laboratory of the U.S. Forest Service. When I asked "What is the first thing to look at in a piece of furniture offered for sale?" the forestry experts said, "See if all the surfaces are the same kind of wood." They also said:

"Look at the sides of a dresser, and the frame of its mirror, if there is one. All four sides of the seat base of a chair should be the same. So should the legs and the back rest. A good table has legs and supporting rails like the top. Wood that is off color or different in grain has been put in to cut down manufacturing expense. Such substitutes do not necessarily detract from the sturdy construction of the piece, but they should make the price lower than that of a table which is carefully matched throughout.

"Another important point to check is construction. See if the piece is solidly and rigidly built. All joints should be securely made and well reinforced at critical places."

Questions are often asked about veneered furniture. The idea prevails that "solid" maple or "solid" mahogany is more desirable than furniture made of veneered woods. Apparently the Forest Products Laboratory scientists think that both of them have their good points. They point out that a large proportion of present-day furniture is veneered, and tell you that veneered pieces in good condition came out of the tomb of King Tut when it was discovered a few years ago. They cite also the magnificent desk of King Louis XV of France, which took nine years to make. This is all marquetry or veneer inlays of such beautiful woods as tulip, rosewood, mahogany, ebony, holly, maple, pear, walnut, laburnum, placed in beautiful patterns.

By veneer construction is meant the use of thin layers of one kind of wood for the tops, sides, drawer fronts, and other exposed parts of a piece of furniture otherwise made of some other wood or of a cheaper quality of the same wood. The insides of drawers may be lined or veneered with very smooth, good woods in some of the better pieces. In the manufacture of built-up veneer panels such as are used for drawer bottoms and the sides and backs of dressers, buffets, and other



pieces, three, or sometimes five, sheets of veneer about 1/28 to 1/20 of an inch thick are glued together. The grain of each sheet runs at right angles to that of the adjacent sheet. The resulting product, known as plywood, is very strong. It neither shrinks nor swells very much. Nails do not split it easily.

By solid construction is meant the use of lumber which is not faced by veneers in the exposed parts of the furniture. A so-called solid top or drawer front may, however, be composed of several narrow boards glued together along their edges. Hidden parts like drawer bottoms and dresser or mirror backs need not be of the same kind of wood as the parts you see.

Veneered furniture has advantages in some respects and disadvantages in others. Not only is plywood stronger, in some respects than a solid board of the same thickness. Highly figured woods, sometimes impractical to use in thick sizes, can be used for face veneers. This method reduces the expense of using the highly figured woods and makes the supply go farther.

Again, because of the thinness of the finer face veneers, several pieces, cut consecutively, look practically alike and can be matched to produce symmetrical figures impossible to obtain in solid construction. Well-made veneered panels are less likely to shrink, check, or warp excessively than solid pieces.

Curved and irregular surfaces can easily be produced by gluing veneer together in shaped forms which would be difficult, if not impossible, to produce from solid lumber.

The advantages of solid construction are as follows: the satisfaction of the owner in knowing that a piece of furniture is constructed throughout of the kind of wood represented at the surface; the fact that the wood can be carved; that if the surface chips off, the same kind of wood is exposed; that the surface can be heavily sanded or even planed off and refinished. When veneered panels are not properly constructed the surface layers may loosen and peel off, if they are allowed to become wet for any length of time. Prolonged dampness may also affect the glue used in the joints of solid furniture.

Whatever kind of furniture is chosen, it requires good care when once in the house. If the air in the house is too dry or too damp it may be affected. Don't put furniture close to a radiator or register where it will get direct heat. Don't ever store it in a damp basement, or in a shed, out of doors. If it has a fine surface finish, go over it at regular intervals with a dust cloth which has been oiled with a few drops of good furniture polish or linseed oil.

A number of furniture manufacturers have agreed to adopt the rules and interpretations of the Federal Trade Commission, by which the correct names of the wood or woods used in a piece of furniture shall be plainly given on the label. Exposed surfaces of all furniture shall be correctly described. If made entirely of solid wood, the kind or kinds shall be named. If veneered, the kinds of wood both of the veneer and that underneath shall be stated. Woods popularly regarded as of higher value shall not be named if a greater part of the piece is made of wood of a lesser value. Where these rules are observed, the purchaser can be reasonably sure of buying what she thinks she is getting.

